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LETTER

From a
DISSENTER
To the
Petitioning Bishops.

My Lords,

HAVING seen a Paper that goes under the name of your *Petition to His Majesty for not insisting upon his Order for Reading his most Gracious Declaration in your Publick Assemblies.* I confess I was not a little startled at it, that Men so long and so much professing Loyalty should appear so miserably defective in that point. I challenge you (after all your exclaiming against the poor Dissenters as Factious and Rebellious) to give an instance of their Disobeying their Prince's Command in any such matter, what they stuck at was purely for Conscience sake, which you have not to Plead in this thing; here was no assent nor consent requir'd, no interfering with any Law of God, but only a Publication of His Majesties most Pious design to set all his Subjects at liberty from that Bondage they so dolefully groan'd under. Now as *Samuel Reasoned with Israel* about their affairs then, pray my Lords give me leave to reason with you about this important affair now; you are Men of Worth and Learning, you are Professors of the Gospel of Peace and Love, and it might therefore be well expected from you, that you should have put the King upon it before he did it, and improv'd your great Interest in his Majesty on the behalf of the sore oppressed and horridly abused *Dissenters*; but alas *altum silentium* to say no more, what provoking and incensing the King there was against them you best know; However after Heaven had inspir'd his Majesty with this Glorious Project we expected your rejoicing at it, your thanking the King for it, and hearty closing with him in it. But who could imagine the murmuring, the grumbling, the discontent this Great Act of Goodness and Grace has rais'd among you, especially the unmannerly (pardon the expression) refusing to make it known to the People, though the King so absolutely commanded it. Pray my Lords let me ask you a Question. Suppose the King instead of his Declaration had issued out a Proclamation commanding Justices of the Peace, Constables, Informers, and all other persons to be more rigorous (if possible) against Dissenters, and doe their utmost to the perfect quelling and destroying them, and had order'd this to be read in your Churches in the time of Divine Service, would you have made any scruple of that? Ah! no, Methinks I see your Chirping Parsons how brisk they look in the Desk with such a Paper in their hands as the second course
after

after the first mess of Prayers is over, being a Dish more dainty than the rest, and how the Paraphrase upon it would furnish them with matter all the day after without being beholden to the Bible for any other Text.

Good my Lords consider, what can we or the whole World think of you, who are so averse to Mercy, and so eager to any thing of Rigour. You intimate in your Paper that *you want no tenderness to Dissenters*, strange and wonderful News if true, but pray my Lords tell us the meaning of this expression in plain English, for it is more intricate to us than *Sampson's Riddle* was to the *Philistines*; an Interpreter the other day undertook to expound it thus, *that your Lordships want no tenderness to Dissenters, because you never judg'd tenderness a thing fit for them*; and it must be carried some such way, for to take it in the literal sense, 'tis a great untruth (which we cannot suppose your Lordships guilty of) to say *you want no tenderness to Dissenters*, when the whole Land knows you never shew'd any. How many scores of Prisons were fill'd with Dissenters not many Ages past and their Families suffering at home, nor did your Lordships out of your great Revenues ever send a Penny to relieve them, here would have been a notable proof of your *tenderness*, and so have been a Testimony against (or at least using endeavours to prevent) the horrible wrongs, oppressions, and abuses put upon them even to the ruining their Families. Something of this nature (my Lords) would have convinc'd this unbelieving Generation of your *Tenderness*. But *hujus contrarium miserimum est*.

My Lords, the design of this Letter is to offer you good and seasonable advice, and pray be not angry with me for my good will, I am a person that has suffer'd much, very much by the fury of that Church you sit at helm to guide, and yet God is my witness, I desire not an hair of your head should fall to the ground, so far am I from revenge; and therefore pray my Lords for your own sake, for your Churches sake, for *England's* sake, and if all this will not do, then for God's sake debate the matter well you are now in hand with, weigh every thing in a right ballance, and consider thoroughly whether flying in your Sovereign's Face, and disobeying his most just command be a cause will bear you out in suffering. My Lords I pity you, and am really concern'd for you, retract, retract before it be too late, ask God and the King Pardon for your opposing the best of works, and give us (who would fain have) some ground to believe you inclinable to heal, as you have been to destroy. I think you have it in your Liturgy, *From Pride, vain Glory and Hypocrisie, &c.* A good Prayer, I pray God keep you all from it. My Lords, believe me if you can (I am sure you may) that I am

London, June 1st. 1688.

Your well-wishing Servant

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